

## Creating History in THE OTHER FRANCISCO

from Jump Cut no. 30, Mar. 1985, by Julia Lesage

"People who want an unobtrusive lesson really do not want a lesson at all." --Bertolt Brecht<sup>1</sup>

Didacticism plays a major role in Third World filmmaking. That is, films made by militant Third World filmmakers outside U.S. and European production and distribution systems have to assume several cultural tasks at once. Their films uncover national history and indigenous culture kept hidden for so long. Furthermore, they try to provide new viewing experiences that will decolonize ordinary people's reception of the mass media. Revolutionary consciousness is often held back by U.S. and European values, which have inundated Third World cinemas and televisions for years.

For example, Hollywood films and stale old television programs like "I Love Lucy" or "McHale's Navy" play over and over in dubbed versions throughout Latin America, long after they are laid to rest or relegated to late night cable television here. Viewers love them. Hollywood's high production values and fantasy scenarios set in lavish surroundings insure the films' appeal. Sometimes a national film industry also creates popular feature films but often through even more formulaic genres, Mexico's "singing caballero" productions and Argentina's "white telephone" middle-class sexual-triangle films have long runs, often recirculated year after year, especially in rural areas. More recently, most Latin American capitals offer the same pornographic films available in any large city in the United States, Japan, or Europe. Such an international distribution of pornography, as well as massive U.S. and European-style advertising, erases national differences in sexual attitudes and overlays a powerfully imaged imperialist version of sexual politics. Furthermore, especially in urban areas, most families, even poor ones, aspire to owning a television set even though it costs at least four times what it would in its country of origin.

In revolutionary Latin America, as in Cuba or Nicaragua, the new government must immediately begin to decolonize the media--in order to promote national identity and new habits of reception in spectators. These two countries have approached this task by creating national film institutes, prioritizing the use of expensive imported filmmaking materials and also recognizing mass media's power as a social institution. These institutes produce films, train new filmmakers, and create new distribution modes, even if leaving old distribution networks intact, as in Nicaragua with its mixed capitalist and socialist economy.

Contemporary revolution occurs where media institutions already exist and where people's viewing habits and preferences are already formed. And left revolutionary governments usually reject as national policy, media puritanism, that is, "protecting" the citizenry from foreign culture, as was tried in the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Latin American revolutions have taken place and are being waged now in countries tied historically and economically to the United States. Cuba and Nicaragua have never expected to separate their people from wanting U.S. things. In Cuban movie theaters,

pirated dubbed versions of Hollywood films run several months or a year after their U.S. release. In Nicaragua, INCINE, the national film institute, took over and runs about 40% of the movie theaters, formerly owned by Somozistas, and screens mainly U.S. and European films, selected for artistic value or political progressiveness. In fact, that's what's available. Nicaragua's television is state run, similarly, each day Managua's television programs include one or more U.S. or European films, as well as U.S. television serials such as "Wonder Woman," "Star Trek," and "The Incredible Hulk." Contemporary Third World revolutions accept the complexity of their people's relation to the mass media and are trying various approaches to changing media forms and modes of reception.

Teshome Gabriel calls cinema made either within Third World revolutions or by militant filmmakers in prerevolutionary societies "Third Cinema"--a cinema resisting both imperialism and the dominant media's ideology, without necessarily rejecting that media entirely.

"...The principal characteristic of Third Cinema is ... the ideology it espouses and the consciousness it displays. The Third Cinema is that cinema of the Third World which stands opposed to imperialism and class oppression in all their ramifications and manifestations..."

In selecting the themes and styles for his or her work, the filmmaker's choice is both ideologically determined and circumscribed. Since the filmmaker disclaims a "non-class" or "above-class" ideology, he/she is necessarily committed to a certain ideological mode of presentation and a codified way of interpreting not only culture but reality itself.

Chiefly, film in a Third World context seeks to a) decolonize minds, b) contribute to the development of a radical consciousness, c) lead to a revolutionary transformation of society, and d) develop a new film language with which to accomplish these tasks.<sup>2</sup>

Ideally, Third Cinema creates in the viewer an understanding of imperialism's mechanisms, including an understanding of how imperialism uses the mass media.<sup>3</sup> It also sparks an impulse to act. It is an empowering cinema, not a cinema of spectacle received by a passive, entranced audience. It may be a Brechtian cinema. But, because it is a revolutionary cinema, it must also be popular. It bridges the gap between viewing habits already shaped by well-loved, imperialist film and television, and revolutionary viewing habits.

It is in this context that *THE OTHER FRANCISCO*, a Cuban feature film about slavery and about an abolitionist novel parallel in importance to our Uncle Tom's *Cabin* (written ten years before the novel *Francisco*), has a special significance for anyone considering how to teach through fictional film. This work, made in 1975 by Cuban director Sergio Giral, stands as a model for one kind of Brechtian cinema made within a revolution.<sup>4</sup> It is heavily didactic. At the same time--or because of that--it "hooks" the viewer into its narrative flow by using a certain kind of narrative tension and romantic, intensely emotionally coded images. It has a verbally saturated, expository sound track,

which often uses interviews and voice-over narration, and it also has a powerful emotional force. There is a constant interplay between the film's emotionally coded elements and its lengthy voice-over statements and interviews. This interplay lets us critique from shifting perspectives the filmed fiction, the visual cinematic elements used to present that fiction (i.e., the visual coding of dominant cinema), the institution of slavery, the bourgeois documentation of slavery, and the class position of the intellectual.

The film provides an added emotional pleasure beyond its depiction of love, oppression, and rebellion--that is, it gives pleasure in learning, what Godard, borrowing from Nietzsche, entitled "le gal savoir." *THE OTHER FRANCISCO* teaches viewers how to evaluate the class nature of information in general so that it encourages viewers how to think about the class nature of what they read and what they see on film or television. As Brecht desired, this film sets up a process of learning which only begins with the viewing experience. The learning process continues as spectators apply the film's analytic strategy to the flow of information they receive in their daily life.

### **THE PRACTICAL ACTIVITY OF THE REVOLUTION**

"My father is Cuban and my mother is from the United States. . . .After I finished high school here in Cuba, I went to New York to live and work [in 1954]. . . . All kinds of work: washing dishes, scrubbing floors, little by little making my way up to the exalted position of office boy or bellboy. All this despite having a high school diploma and being able to speak the language. . . . And I was even an American citizen." --Sergio Giral<sup>5</sup>

"I was remembering that the majority of black filmmakers in the United States used to speak of making black films. It's a concept which I am unable to handle. . . . It's just not part of our mentality. I don't want you to think that I am taking a demagogical stance, or anything of the sort, but not even I, as a black man, can conceive of a "black" filmmaker or a "black" film. It is because the practical activity of the revolution makes it impossible for us to conceive of the question of those categories. We have to retain the concept of race as an historical, social category, as a kind of individual trait like any other." --Sergio Giral<sup>6</sup>

As part of the "practical activity of the revolution," Sergio Giral made a documentary in 1967 interviewing the then 107-year-old escaped slave Esteban Montejo. During the long period of the Cuban Republic, 1902-1958, historiography had covered over and distorted slave history. In particular, slave rebellions and communities of runaway slaves or *palenques* were never discussed in the history books published during the Republic. Nor did historians acknowledge slave participation in the decades-long fight for independence from Spain (1869-1898), a participation, for example, which greatly disillusioned the then free Esteban Montejo about former slaves' prospects for a good life under democracy (he relates his war experiences in his *Autobiography of a Runaway Slave*).<sup>7</sup> Lost forever, too, is any understanding of the social relations that existed in those first revolutionary Cuban communities, the *palenques*. As Giral points out,

". . . any treatment of the palenques would have to be almost exclusively fictional because there is no extant written material of archeological evidence nothing has survived to show us how the runaways lived."[8](#)

"And there was an incredible number of runaways in Cuba-sometimes possibly as many as a third to a half of the slaves had escaped and lived in the mountains."[9](#)

What did the bourgeois era use instead of an accurate history to tell the story of slavery? As the United States had *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Cuba had an abolitionist novel, *Francisco*, written in 1839. For a time *Francisco* was suppressed since it challenged Spanish colonial economic institutions. In that sense, the novel's history is quite different from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which in the form of theatrical roadshows toured all of northern United States, reaching even into the backwoods. Because of its official suppression, the novel *Francisco* was mainly circulated in manuscript among intellectuals. This novel was both the first novel in Cuba and written as a commissioned piece. It came out of a literary salon which met in the 1830s at the house of a Cuban landholding aristocrat who wanted to promote social reform, Rodrigo del Monte. At del Monte's salon the British ambassador to Cuba, Richard Madden, met national-born or "criollo" intellectual Anselmo Suarez y Romero, son of slave-holding sugar planters who had gone bankrupt. Richard Madden needed an abolitionist novel to create pressure on Spain to abolish slavery and thus to promote British economic interests abroad: modernization, the introduction of British machinery and the creation of new markets.

*Francisco*, Cuba's first novel, has a special importance in Cuban cultural history.[10](#) THE OTHER FRANCISCO critiques that version of slavery as well as offers a cinematic recuperation of slave history. It looks at the conditions of slavery and how national attitudes toward slavery were shaped. It especially exposes the class origins of those attitudes. It differentiates the way intellectuals, landowners, and slaves looked at the same moment in Cuban history, the moment of slave rebellion.

This film, which Giral says in an understated way that he made as a "practical task of the revolution," has a complex cinematic structure. Giral has simultaneously created a history of slavery and critiqued from a class and historical perspective how people in Cuba were able to think about slavery. In our own time in the United States, a similar task would have been accomplished by the television serial based on Alex Haley's *Roots* if it had equally analyzed the class origins and function of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as well as life under slavery, that is, if television had given viewers tools to analyze the institutions and class nature of knowledge, especially the knowledge we receive through mainstream sources about the "oppressed."

THE OTHER FRANCISCO has an unique style. In the image track of certain sequences, it depicts romantic love, lost love, rape, brutal beatings, and murders of slaves--principally images of individual villainy and individual tragedy. The film's emotional focus changes. It introduces and then in a concentrated way ends on images of solidarity among slaves; it moves from depicting their mutual oppression to showing their collective resistance and rebellion. The subject matter of repression and rebellion can be treated in an intensely emotional way, and this film does not reject emotion. But the

sequences with a highly emotional comment are kept brief, often cut short, so that viewers do not become overwhelmed in pathos. And the film's whole structure comments on 19th century Romanticism. A romantic mode of narration, which focuses on an individual couple's tragedy and a sexually frustrated landowner's villainy, had a specific social function in the novel *Francisco*; it repressed images of the slaves' rage and capacity for revolution.

In the film's treatment of the novel, personal romantic imagery gives way to images of a more collectively generated emotion. We see the slaves' festival of destroying the masters' property and their effective personal and social release as many of them literally escape. The film locates emotion within a specific historical context and traces both what emotions a romantic novelist would attribute to slaves--and why--and what emotions we might more realistically assign slaves as we consider the specific conditions of their bondage. The film does not back off from showing and using intensely emotional moments, particularly in the sequences depicting brutality, as a more symbolic style of Brechtian left filmmaking would do out of political principle (e.g., Godard and Gorin in their Dziga Vertov period, 1968-1972, rejected all "narcotic" aspects of cinematic identification).<sup>11</sup> THE OTHER FRANCISCO uses conventional visual connotation to draw viewers into its scenes.

The film opens as follows. We see the slave Francisco sitting on a rock by a stream in glistening sunlight, surrounded by blossoming trees. A beautiful, fairer-skinned black woman wearing earrings and dressed in white is shown in close-up. The two run to embrace. They meet in a clearing in the woods. She tells him tearfully that to save his life, she has become the master's concubine, that she "doesn't belong to him anymore," and that they shall never see each other again. We see her white figure in long shot running through the sun-dappled forest with its glistening leaves and then see Francisco in extreme long shot staggering in despair, running through a grove of tall, phallic-like trees and throwing himself on the ground, flailing at the leaves and dust with his fists. There is a cut to two white men riding through the forest, coming toward the camera, and looking up. Buzzards circle in the sky. The camera tilts and we see, with the riders in the background, first Francisco's hanged feet and then his whole rotting corpse.

The sound track in this sequence consisted of the forest sounds and the flowing river (heard at a louder than natural volume), the slaves' dialogue, and romantic orchestral music. We hear bells, harps, and violins in the music and later also drums. The drums and gourds are orchestrated in the film as a motif for slave culture, and later they "take over" the musical track.

At the point where we see the hanged man, a voice over announces, "This Negro was Francisco." The image track cuts to a literary salon where the young novelist Anselmo Suarez y Romero is seen reading his manuscript, with an appropriately doleful face. He speaks to an appreciative audience of well-dressed ladies and gentlemen standing around him who clap after he finishes with these words: "The mulata was consumed little by little till many years later she died"; then over that image track, another voice speaks; and for the rest of the film, the character Suarez y Romero's voice reading from the novel and this other male voice speak in voice over. The novelist's voice is

"embodied" with occasional sync sound narration. The other voice is never "seen." It is also never qualified as it offers a class analysis of the novel and Cuban slave society. Both voices enter at strategic points. Both may shift the "action" to introduce another type of scene or comment on the scenes we have just watched; the latter voice also comments on what the novelist says. The film has no markers beyond voice quality to distinguish between voices over. Later, interviews form part of the fictional history. These are spoken with "educated" male voices, also talking in a similar style. Only what I shall call from now on the "film's narrator," that voice never attached visually to a character, speaks an analysis which is unquestioned, the analysis of imperialism itself.

As I shall demonstrate later, the role of such a voice in a "revolutionary" film has a far different relation to the spectator than would an authoritative voice over in a U.S. documentary film, especially an educational film or one made for television. Partly this has to do with the relation of cultural institutions to the rest of Cuban society. It is this talkiness and the interplay of rather complex ideas, which are shown to be class defined in origin and goals, that make the film heavily didactic. And the unquestioned primacy of the film narrator's interpretation signals a fascinating difference from our own cinema, a difference that Teshome Gabriel refers to in defining Third Cinema.

The film narrator's voice is first heard as we see Rodrigo del Monte's literary salon. It asks, "Or did the novel have within it another Francisco whom Anselmo Suarez y Romero never got around to showing us?" This is the first of that voice's test questions which it poses throughout the film, questions that teach about the class origins of knowledge itself. Then, over a frozen image of the elegantly dressed house slave Francisco, a coachman standing by a carriage with a whip in his hand, come the film's titles.

After this prologue, the fiction moves to show slave oppression--partly through the novel's eyes, young landowner Ricardo Mendizibal vengefully tortures Francisco because Francisco and Sra. Mendizibal's personal maid, Dorotea, love each other. We learn that Francisco had been sent by Sra. Mendizibal from her house in the city to the plantation by her son Ricardo because the mistress had forbidden Francisco and Dorotea to marry and they had had an illegitimate child.

A long middle section presents sequences detailing acts of oppression. The figures who abuse the slaves are introduced--the overseers, the plantation doctor, the priest, and those slaves who act as the overseers' captains to beat the other slaves. Intermittently come contrastive images of solidarity and slave resistance. In particular, after a long sequence filmed in lushly romantic imagery detailing the two house slaves' privileged condition and Francisco and Dorotea's love, we see an elegantly dressed Francisco, wearing a top hat, assisting his mistress into the coach along with the white-dressed Dorotea--both women wear lace mantillas. The romantic couple exchange love glances. the voice over, here the novelist, tells about Francisco's punishment before the slave himself knows of his mistress's intent. Then the image freezes on the gesture of the lovers' holding each other's glance, significant in the narration because they cannot "speak" their love; in terms of general social oppression, the oppressed are forbidden a social voice. The film narrator enters over that image and points out the discrepancy



between what the novel, within a romantic framework, depicts as true love and what slave women, in fact, experienced.

The tone of the imagery shifts from showing lyrically filmed and elegantly costumed house slaves to extremely brutal but briefly held images of sexual brutality toward slave women. A woman sits on the same rock by the river where we had seen Francisco, she is raped by the overseer. Pregnant women must cut and carry cane, as must children. A child is run over in the fields by a cart; his mother drops her load of cane and runs to his fallen body. She screams with grief. In a longer sequence, a pregnant field hand dressed in rags, with her hair in pigtails, squats in the forest preparing a bitter, herbal potion, drinking it, and inducing an abortion. The film's narrator introduces this sequence:

"Infant mortality was often 100%. All human feelings were ruled out for slaves because of their condition. Women's repugnance about bringing up others to live in the same conditions of exploitation led them to avoid pregnancy."

As the woman in the forest provokes an abortion, we hear birds and a conch, one of the instruments of slave communication and slave music. As we saw Francisco writhing in the leaves in despair, so we see this woman writhing in dappled sunlight as she suffers the miscarriage totally alone. These images, heavily emotional ones, show slave women's condition, but the film does not "let us inside" slave women's consciousness as the novel lets us "inside" the minds and feelings of the aristocrats and the two house slaves. Romantic subjectivity and emotional life, according to the film, belong to the leisured class.

Following this narrative contrast about slavery and love, the film examines "villainy." We see Ricardo teaching the rosary to kneeling slave children. From that spot he orders Francisco to be beaten and put in shackles. The novelist's voice over says that Ricardo hated Francisco because they both loved the same person: "But while Francisco had genuine and tender passion for her, Ricardo had only bastardized and offensive lust for the mulata." A long series of sequences depicts Ricardo's efforts to force himself on Dorotea and the increasingly brutal vengeance he takes against Francisco when she resists. The scenes become briefer and more violent, building in crescendo.

Contrasted here are the house's sunlit interior, with its painting of the Virgin of Guadeloupe and big mirror in the bedroom, and the interior of the filthy dark infirmary where Dorotea finally sees Francisco stretched out on planks, dying from repeated lashings. It is at this point that Dorotea capitulates to Ricardo. This series of sequences about Ricardo's villainy ends on a freeze frame. We see an extreme close-up of Dorotea's tear-streamed face and crying eyes. Over that freeze frame, once again the narrator's voice challenges the novel's perspective: the viewer must look at something else, use another tactic to analyze slavery. "In the novel, Ricardo did what he did because he was moved by his passion, but was passion all that caused him to hurt Francisco and Dorotea? A *hacendado* of those days would have had other motivations."

Subsequently the film introduces other male characters, the movers of slave society. As it depicts Ricardo's milieu, the film explicitly sets out the economic and social interests

that "traditional" and "modern" *hacendados* of the time might have had--the interests of the British, the exporters of the machinery for sugar mills, and of the older Spanish colonials, who were reluctant to free slaves. Older and newer ideologies compete for the aristocrats' adherence. The priest, along with Ricardo's mother, does not want slaves to work on Sunday; a conservative way of defending slaves' humanity says, "Save their souls." The priest preaches to the gathered slaves, "Your souls will fly to heaven after enduring this Calvary." At Ricardo's lavishly appointed dinner an older aristocrat argues that to free the slaves would result in another Haiti, a realistic fear since the black population outnumbered the white. The younger landowners and the British diplomat, Richard Madden, argue that the new milling machines will need three shifts of labor and that it is more economical to free slaves and pay them a small wage to feed themselves than it is to drive one's slaves to death (importation of slaves was by then illegal, although landowners maneuvered around the law). Much information about slavery is presented through interviews as the British diplomat interviews Ricardo, the novelist, the overseer, and del Monte. Furthermore, the film repeats the images of the novelist's reception in del Monte's salon; here the film's narrator questions the class interests behind *Francisco's* origins.

Finally, narrative emphasis shifts to slave rebellion. Riders lead in an escaped slave, Crispin, whom we had seen earlier helping Francisco in the fields. Although he, like Francisco, is shackled, Crispin and several other slaves plan acts of sabotage and escape. They organize through the indigenous forms available to them--through gestures and glances while working, politicized religious rituals of African origin, burning the fields and finally killing the traitorous slave captains and the overseer, sacking the plantation, and--for some--running away to escape.

In the film's conclusion, once again Francisco runs through the woods and throws himself on the ground, flailing with his arms. The film's narrator asks if a slave would have committed suicide, above all, for love, if other forms of slave rebellion existed. The sound track now uses other emotional elements; we hear drums, cries and African dialect as we see the slaves burning the cane fields and plantation buildings. They collectively kill the slave captain, who had beaten his fellow slaves. The momentarily free slaves sack the landholding family's possessions in an orgy of passionate rebellion, the festival of the oppressed. Over these scenes of "riot," the film's narrator lists many slave rebellions that actually took place both before and after *Francisco* was written, these were the slave rebellions that the ascendant bourgeoisie in the republic never acknowledged.

The final images of this uprising seal the film's comment on the iconography of sexuality and romantic love. The field hand who had provoked an abortion seizes a white dress from a trunk in the big house and puts it on, dancing among the other jubilant slaves. The overseer's assistant and other whites ride in and murder everyone who had not run to the mountains. A brief shot shows Francisco's corpse hanged in a burnt-out shed alongside that of this woman slave, dressed in white (presumably Dorotea was in the city with Sra. Mendizibal). The house slave's passivity had kept him from running off to the palenques, and the woman field hand had always been subject to a brutality which the maid in the big house would not likely experience.



This whole section of slave rebellion is shot with a mobile camera we also see many figures moving in and out of frame. It's as if the camera joined the people. Images of masses of escaped slaves, all men running through the forest, are accompanied by the sounds of cries, chants, and drums. Finally the men stand looking down from a mountain onto a broad vista below, and a brief title rolls over that image telling how the Cuban revolution has broken all color barriers. The film fades to white while we still hear the sounds of the chants and drums.

In its emotional trajectory, the film moves from emphasizing passion to oppression to collective resistance. Such images of passion, oppression, and collective resistance occur at various points throughout the film and implicitly comment on each other. Furthermore, the verbal narration, repetition of key sequences, and emotional shifts in music and sound effects clue viewers how to interpret those kinds of images. Although the sound track is generally didactic and expository, the image track shifts in emotional emphasis and we are constantly invited to consider it from yet another perspective. In a sense, beyond instructing viewers about the conditions of slavery and the novel *Francisco*, the film offers instruction on narrative fictional film's tactics of characterization.

## ICONOGRAPHY

"Analytically, a connotation is determined by two spaces: a sequential space, a series of orders, a space subject to the successivity of sentences, in which meaning proliferates by layering; and an agglomerative space, certain areas of the text correlating with other meanings outside the material text and, with them, forming a "nebulae" of signifieds." -- Roland Barthes<sup>[12](#)</sup>

"'Feeling' is a group phenomenon which tends to consider itself 'generally human'; although it derives from a group, it cannot recognize itself as from the group." -- Bertolt Brecht<sup>[13](#)</sup>

"As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production." -- Karl Marx and Freidrich Engels<sup>[14](#)</sup>

Fictional feature filmmaking, what has been called classical narrative cinema, assigns its characters clearly recognizable traits that are immediately readable by viewers. The major characters gain traits by accumulation, so that any major change in how we "read" those characters marks a movement of the plot. The plot's resolution depends on the viewer's sense of "knowing," even "finally knowing" what to think about the protagonists and the villains. Minor characters in classical narrative cinema change much less and are more likely stereotypes.<sup>[15](#)</sup> *THE OTHER FRANCISCO* also assigns its characters easily readable traits, but here those traits explicitly signal that character's class position, relation to production, and level of social consciousness or false consciousness. *THE OTHER FRANCISCO* does not reject narrative cinema's "emotional finger pointing," a convention used to shape how audiences will receive a given character.

But the Cuban film expands on that emotional finger pointing, or assignation of overcoded and obvious attributes to characters, to examine the social and especially the economic forces shaping characters' feelings and thoughts. Sometimes the film relates incidents about the landowners' petit bourgeois cohorts to illustrate these groups' ideological support for the status quo and their economic role as the direct oppressors of the slaves. In this latter role, the film presents minor characters complexly; in particular, it shows them often acting sexually sadistically, thus linking sexual abuse and an aggressive assertion of power. The plantation physician treats Francisco's lashes with purgatives; the priest wants to save the slaves from damnation, which they would fall into because of their "onanism, promiscuity, and sodomy"; the overseer boasts to Ricardo that he smeared Francisco's lashes with the "usual poultice of urine, salt, rum, and tobacco." When he sits drinking at night with his assistant, the overseer brags, "When it comes to the whip, they all turn over and beg, 'Don Antonio,'" like fawning women, as he indicates with gestures.

Since the film takes pains to delineate the minor characters within a social context, the class limitations on their thinking is effectively shown. This is especially true of Sra. Mendizibal, whose hands speak for her. She goes to the plantation infirmary to donate leftover food, but the physician must lead her quickly out when she almost vomits and puts her handkerchief to her face to ward off the stench. She wrings her white lace handkerchief when Francisco asks for permission to marry; we understand that she intends to put him off indefinitely. When she visits the plantation to "forgive" the house slaves and finally permit them to marry, she hears and believes Ricardo's lies about Francisco's malice. In this sequence we see her passing among the slaves, who kiss her extended hand and say, "Your blessing, my mistress." She taps a small bird cage with her fan when she praises Dorotea's docility to Ricardo; her words become his cue to attack the maid. Sra. Mendizibal's hand is kissed by Richard Madden at the literary salon. Finally, as she leaves the plantation, she knows Ricardo will work the slaves to death--the matter is in his hands as she returns to genteel life in Havana. Her hand gestures are futile in terms of her own class but they have effective power over slaves' lives. The token kisses that aristocratic men give her hands and the required ones which slaves, and especially Dorotea, must give those hands indicate both her power as an aristocrat and her relative ineffectiveness as a woman. In particular, her hand gestures reveal the huge gap between her life of ease and that of the pregnant field hands.

Francisco and Ricardo are assigned a more complex set of traits. Francisco acts with mildness and resignation--false consciousness when looked at within the context of the field hands' rebelliousness. Francisco makes mistakes, lacks judgment and courage, and is the victim of Ricardo's and the overseer's particular wrath. All of this the film shows as due to his somewhat higher class status as house-related coachman. Perhaps Giral drew some of Francisco's iconography from Esteban Montejo's memoirs:

"[The drivers] were the dandies of the colored people. ... If a boy was pretty and lively, he was sent inside to the master's house and there they started softening him up...."[16](#)

Francisco is seen as "presumptuous" for loving Dorotea and fathering her child. He offends both the mistress and her son. Yet his socialization into gentility does not allow

him to vent his rage, even though he shares the fate of death along with more rebellious slaves.

Ricardo's characterization is flat. He is established by his blondness, palomino horse, and luxurious home. He shares with the all-too willing overseer the desire to brutalize Francisco, as he tells the overseer that Francisco "gave the Señora's maid a big belly after the Señora had raised him like a son."

Francisco and Ricardo's related positions within a sexual triangle, as well as the differences in their social and physical existence, can be traced in this succession of images which follow Ricardo's attacking Dorotea. Ricardo attacks Dorotea as she is making up the mistress's bed, he rips open her bodice and slaps her as she stands below a portrait of the Virgin of Guadeloupe. Dorotea's dark hair falls down loose around her head. Ricardo threatens angrily, "I can do with him what I please, and I please to destroy him bit by bit until you give in or he dies." Then he hits and throws Dorotea to the floor.

The next shot cuts to Ricardo on his palomino horse galloping through the fields. As the horse runs off toward the mill, visible is a cropper around its tail: a kind of vaguely sexual image about aristocratic male power is represented by the horse's blondness, the saddlery, and the animal's galloping haunches. A slave had sabotaged the mill with a file; Ricardo takes the occasion to accuse Francisco. Following is a series of sequences showing Francisco beaten. The first' shot from a very low angle, emphasizes the bareness of Francisco's back and that of the slaves who hold him down in the woods as the overseer beats him. His bare back becomes more and more scarred as we see him beaten more times. Finally Dorotea sees him dying in the infirmary, which provokes her to give in to Ricardo. At the point that Dorotea goes back to Ricardo's room, the scene opens on Ricardo's bare back as he stands in a white-walled sunny environment washing himself from a silver bowl with water from a silver pitcher. Bareness here connotes Ricardo's class privileges: cleanliness and sexual right of access. In contrast, Francisco's bare back connotes only the lashes that he receives and Dorotea's understanding that unless she denies her sexual integrity, the man she considers her husband will be beaten until dead. Francisco's and Ricardo's bodies are presented in this series of scenes as parallel cases from very different social groups.

The only instance where THE OTHER FRANCISCO cannot overcome traditional cinematic iconography to make a social point is in the depiction of Dorotea. She is a "beautiful woman" in the traditional cinematic sense and she acts' out a traditional melodramatic motive, to save her man. Her labor or that of any of the other slave women in the domestic sphere is not delineated-it seems as if domestic life among the slaves did not exist. The film manipulates Dorotea's figure far more for pathos and far closer to the novel *Francisco's* tragically romantic version of slave life than it does any other character. In particular, in a late sequence in the film, shots of mechanical failure or sabotage at the mill are intercut with shots of Ricardo's raping Dorotea while the Señora is away. Here the shots of the two people's twisted thighs provide only a conventional voyeuristic depiction of sexual intercourse; they do not convey the social situation of rape.

Although *THE OTHER FRANCISCO* generally examines the class nature of the characters' assigned traits, the established photographic conventions for treating female beauty are so stubborn to overcome, Dorotea's image rarely moves beyond those conventions. The film's only recourse is to set up the contrast of the pregnant field hand in pigtails and rags who induces an abortion and is later hanged next to Francisco. Freezing the image on an extreme close-up of Dorotea's face with tears in her eyes as Ricardo is taking her conveys more information about beauty and pathos than it does about women's anger at rape. What the film fails to do here is what it does do in the rest of the film as it deals with issues of men's lives: to delineate the economic and material *structures* of slave women's lives, especially their social relations and daily lives.

Giral's failure here is both aesthetic and political. Politically he has not sufficiently analyzed women's roles under slavery. He sees women slaves mainly in terms of sexual abuse and forced labor, not as organizers of slave resistance. As Angela Davis writes, the slave woman in her role in the domestic sphere, in the slave quarters,

"... performed the *only* labor of the slave community which could not be directly and immediately claimed by the oppressor. . . . Precisely through performing the drudgery which has long been a central expression of the socially conditioned inferiority of women, the black woman in chains could help to lay the foundation for some degree of autonomy, both for herself and her men. Even as she was suffering under her unique oppression as female, she was thrust by force of circumstances into the center of the slave community. She was . . . essential to the *survival* of the community."<sup>17</sup>

As Davis points out, "as the center of domestic life, the only life at all removed from the arena of exploitation," the slave woman was "the custodian of a house of resistance." The women in the quarters heard about and aided the runaways, if not runaways themselves. Escapes were planned in domestic space. Furthermore, in the history of slavery, specific acts of resistance are attributable to slave women, house servants, for example, often poisoned their masters' food or set fire to their masters' houses. Certainly the rapes that black women experienced and often fought against were impelled by the men's need to reduce the woman from social person to the level of an animal. It is a need to assert *power* aggressively that motivates the rapist's lust.

*THE OTHER FRANCISCO* cannot develop Dorotea as a social person partly because it uses and cannot overcome conventional cinematic iconography for depicting the romantic heroine, an iconography which the film does not sufficiently critique. In contrast to Francisco and Dorotea, who are victims, other slaves are shown as effective actors within history, as agents. However, the film does not foreground them as individuals or clear-cut "characters," with few exceptions. One man, Andres Lucumi harangues the gathered slaves as they dance to the rhythm of a spiritualist ritual by the slaves' bonfire. He preaches that all tribes from Africa here are united by the machete, which cuts the master's head as well as cane. As Dennis West writes, he

"incarnates both individual and class. Andres Lucumi's first name is that of a specific person while "Lucumi" indicates his Nigerian origin, following the Cuban slave custom of converting the designation of the black's African nation into a surname."<sup>18</sup>

The slaves act collectively. Visually their actions advance the narrative by what Bertold Brecht calls *Gestes*: gestures or attitudes which reveal the whole web of social relations in which the character is enmeshed. The *gestus* demonstrates a character's social attitudes, which are often complex or contradictory. It isolates and singles out some one aspect of people's interactions so that that aspect can be foregrounded and seen in a new light.

The minimization of the *gestus*, conveying the whole social gist in a small detail, becomes particularly appropriate in *THE OTHER FRANCISCO* for depicting slave communication; often open conversation was forbidden or dangerous. Thus work songs express resistance. When Francisco starts working in the cane, we hear sounds of chopping cane and the slave's chant, "Give a hand. We are all brothers." A slave looks at Francisco and shakes his head in compassion. He and another slave exchange glances and then the second man moves in to help Francisco cut cane. The glances, combined with the song, indicate the social relations and web of mutual assistance among the slaves. The same kind of exchange of glances occurs when the slaves pass along a metal file while working (Francisco won't use it). When they dance at night, some signal each other to run away. One man, Crispin, looks at Francisco, who shakes his head and looks down. In response, Crispin looks disappointed, even angry. It's a *gestus* about the solidarity extended to Francisco and his unwillingness to try to escape.

Furthermore, the slaves are characterized collectively by their group activities of working, dancing, and politicizing their spiritualist rituals. Collectively, too, drums and chants "speak" for the group. The slaves all wear the same kind of rags. Characterization of slaves as individuals belongs only to the novel, thus we see the house servants, the novel's protagonists, in privileged modes of dress. The field hands feel collectively, too--feel the emotions of grief, released rage, and escape.<sup>19</sup> The film critiques Romanticism and its ideologies of individualism and the "inner life." It does this especially through differences in how it delineates the lovers and aristocrats and how it delineates the slaves.

### **RICHARD MADDEN: MERCANTILE CAPITALIST RATIONALISM**

At times narrative tension is fully interrupted by long interviews which the character Richard Madden conducts with other characters. These interviews are part of the narration in the way that the film narrator's questions and comments are not. As a diplomat Madden wants to know about slave conditions at that historical time; the characters respond "within character." We would hardly have heard these opinions had the film's narration of a love story been more linear. In that sense, these interviews make the film Brechtian. They interrupt a single style of characterization and allow different modes of presenting information.

Brecht wanted to expand the scope of spectators' curiosity. One tactic he advocated was to have tension be broken by summaries, so people could use these to check back on what went on before, as readers do with "footnotes." He said the story should develop by curves and jumps and that each scene should stand for itself, with its elements kept distinctly separate. One scene should not make another nor depend on an inevitable

succession of events. Rather, scenes should be juxtaposed, the drama often switching drastically in tone and subject matter from one scene to the next. Sometimes Brecht used placards or slides which presented details that referred to the historical moment or showed relations between the action and the world. In Brecht's plays, the distancing effects worked on several levels--distancing between realistic details and schematized history, between the scenes themselves (each one being neatly separated from the other), between the show and the spectators, and between human nature represented and human nature seen as a certain historical state.

Brecht hoped to stimulate audiences to analyze critically phenomena which they had previously absorbed in an unreflective, socially conditioned way. Breaking up the narrative like this, he thought, should keep spectators from becoming caught up inside a linearly developed emotional experience which swept them to catharsis. People should not immerse themselves inside a "representation" without asking how representations are constructed and how they affect us. Brecht advocated juxtapositions, jumps, and switches in tone so as to provoke spectators to stop identifying with characters, which has been one of fiction's main pleasures. He wanted audiences to consider the fiction's source, which is the world itself, in a critical, contradictory, and detached way.

In *THE OTHER FRANCISCO* Richard Madden and his interviews provide Brechtian-style "detachment." Madden is the rationalist, promoting an expanding mercantile capitalism. In real life, Richard Madden published a book on Cuba after he returned to England. Beyond that, he used the novel *Francisco* to document his investigation into Cuban slavery. The statistics which the film character Madden elicits about slavery were taken by Giral either from the real-life Madden's book or more likely from a contemporary Cuban study about the relation of mode of production to slave conditions in the sugar mills, *The Sugarmill* by Manuel Moreno Fraginales.[20](#)

The film's character Richard Madden parallels another cinematic villain, one developed as a romantic antihero in Gillo Pontecorvo's *BURN!*[21](#) Pontecorvo's tactic of placing the skilled and attractive Marion Brando in the role of the imperialist William Walker finally undercuts the film's political analysis. As Joan Mellen points out, *BURN!*'s drama hinges as much [22](#) on the pathos of Walker's story as it does on the depiction of oppression. In contrast, in *THE OTHER FRANCISCO* Giral uses Madden only to represent a certain locus of power, a privileged access to information, and an advanced ideological position. *THE OTHER FRANCISCO* stands as a cinematic response to *BURN!* and counters *BURN!*'s mode of narration and characterization. The information in Madden's interviews is what is essential in *THE OTHER FRANCISCO*, not the "feelings" of the man.

In the sequence where a group of men are visiting Ricardo's plantation to see his new milling machine and have dinner, the priest blesses the mill with holy water. The film's narrator presents a key point:

"The machine speeds up production and makes the slaves' condition much worse. The basic relations between owner and slave are fundamentally those of production."



At the banquet, the younger aristocrats put forth the main arguments for abolition but not on humanitarian grounds:

"If we have machines we need more slaves to work them, two or three times as many."

"And slaves try to get out of work by breaking things."

"The English made workers out of ex-slaves and do not have to care for their upkeep. You pay them a low wage and they have to take care of themselves. All the profits of mechanization go to you."

Following that sequence we see a repeated version of Francisco's suicide. The film's narrator questions the accuracy of thinking Francisco's motive was love. The film cuts to an interview between the blonde Madden and the young dark-haired Suarez y Romero in elegant surroundings. First, we discover that the novelist's family had lost their plantation to creditors but that the novelist had gone back to the old farm home with his family to write because he had personal economic difficulties. He said that is how he documented slave abuse. He reveals his unconscious role as petit bourgeois male intellectual, for he admits that Francisco does not realistically represent someone oppressed but rather someone "tame and peaceful." Suarez y Romero says,

"Since I too have patiently suffered misfortune, I put myself in Francisco's place, endowing him with that mildness and Christian resignation so hard to find in slavery."

At various moments in the film we see a high angle shot of Ricardo's plantation, the structure of which Giral learned from Moreno Fraguera's *The Sugarmill*.<sup>23</sup> Giral himself had studied agricultural engineering in Cuba before joining the Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC). His interest in slave economy and its shift to mercantile economy is borne out in the kinds of information he uses the character Madden's interviews to reveal.

For example, playing chess with Domingo del Monte, Madden hears about the illegal slave trade, the cost of slaves, the percentage of slave population to total population, and the whites' fear of slave rebellion. The liberal landowner del Monte suggests that Cuba "let slavery disappear gradually" as it seeks independence from Spain, not abolish slavery. The bourgeois novel *Francisco* repressed images of slaves' rage and freedom, just as the novelist's patron here advised the not-yet-born Cuban government to do.<sup>24</sup>

Madden interviews the overseer in the overseer's house, a building with a straw roof where a black woman stands holding what is probably the overseer's child. The fact that Madden wishes to visit and interview this man sets Madden apart from the other aristocrats. As an agent of the British government, Madden understands that Spain has used whites' fear of freed slaves to stave off national revolution. It is in England's interest, therefore, to expose in Europe the cruelties of Spanish slavery so as to make room for British exports and to wean the Cuban aristocrats from Spain. He conducts these interviews so as to publish them abroad. His "larger" view as the proponent of a more advanced mechanical mode of production makes him take seriously a man like the



overseer, who is responsible for production. From the overseer, Madden elicits facts about slave conditions. Slaves have been pushed to feed a constant supply of cane to the inexhaustible machines. They get only four hours of sleep a night and are forced to work too much, until a great percentage of them die. Madden points out the folly of keeping slaves in stocks when they could be working or of pushing them past human endurance, but the overseer only says he does what he is paid to do.

The film's narrator supersedes the points of view elicited by Madden, for the emotional and political conclusion of the film is about slave *rebellion*. Over images of collectively expressed emotion, looting and celebrating and running and escape, the narrator's voice lists Cuba's slave rebellions. The list has emotional force because it comes when we, the audience, have already been given an analysis and a fictional experience to weigh what that list means. In a sense, it is dryly rational but it is read over images of rage, drunkenness, and release--and of the corresponding violence on the part of whites in response.<sup>~3</sup> The film has shown the brutal rationality of imperialist expansion moving in on a feudally organized, colonial slave economy. The brutality is embodied in Ricardo and the overseer, the rationality in del Monte and Madden. Now the film concludes with a vision of revolutionary rationalism. The list is no longer just a list; it recuperates national culture and does so in a feature film, which itself is a form that must be "recuperated" or taken over in a new way. In *THE OTHER FRANCISCO* priority becomes placed on creating knowledge, particularly knowledge about those groups historically oppressed.

## **REVOLUTIONARY CULTURE**

"Our whole population has been turned into a university." --Lea Guido, Minister of Health, Nicaragua

Cuba and Nicaragua undertook literacy campaigns immediately after their revolutions. Those campaigns have a cultural significance for the Third World that goes beyond teaching people to read and write. Creating literacy in Cuba and Nicaragua has increased people's desire to know and interact with their own social reality, so the literacy campaigns have also created mass consciousness about how and why information becomes distorted and deformed.

As much as urban dwellers in Latin America have been surrounded by capitalist mass culture, the mass media in Latin America generally coexist with mass illiteracy. In such a case, television and film offer the only available, but an ideologically selective and grossly distorting, "window on the world." In these prerevolutionary Third World cultures, large sectors of national culture remain invisible and an accurate national history has never been taught. As Eduardo Galeano writes in his analysis of the Nicaraguan literacy campaign:

"The histories of all our countries are shown to us as marginal notes on the pages of the rest; the native insurrections and the revolts of black slaves are mentioned in passing, when they are mentioned at all, as episodes of bad conduct; the great economic and social processes do not even exist as backdrops. . . . In the duel of good and evil, the

masses passively play the role of extras. . . . The incident of Palmares, in which black slaves lived freely throughout the whole of the 17th century, defeating successive Portuguese and Dutch military expeditions, merits at best a couple of lines in the history books of Brazil.[26](#)

Coinciding with Cuba and Nicaragua's literacy campaigns was the *brigadistas'* (the literary teachers') growth. Going out into remote rural areas, young women brigadistas broke traditions about feminine roles and entered actively into political life. In this experience, the brigadistas learned about ways of life no one in the dominant cultural sphere had previously acknowledged. The literacy campaigns let the country learn about itself. And the brigadistas learned how intellect--theirs and the people's they worked with--blossomed with the desire to build a new way of life. As a group of young women brigadistas discussed women's roles in a seminar preparing them for Nicaragua's literary campaign (their literacy text, built on Paulo Freire's method, had a section on women):

"It has only been possible within a revolution for women here to develop themselves intellectually and physically. The revolution is what liberates us."[27](#)

Growing intellectually, changing one's own and others' social attitudes and transforming the country characterize a Cuban's or Nicaraguan's active participation in "cultural" revolution. What is properly cultural spills over into other areas. In Nicaragua, for example, two years of the revolution have seen many diseases eradicated principally through mass participation and mass education. Managua's daily papers carry entomological reports about pests threatening the crops. Plagues of wholly new diseases, suspected to be U.S.-induced bacteriological warfare, are combated by mass education, so that in every workplace can be seen posters that teach people how to deal with an epidemic of otherwise incurable bloody conjunctivitis.

In Cuba and Nicaragua, that is, inside left revolutionary culture in Latin America, discourse has changed. The class nature of "educated" discourse has shifted so that educated discourse and popular discourse are more nearly coterminous. Education is now an ongoing process among people of all ages, conducted through new forms. At work, in work councils, and in the neighborhoods, through block committees, people whose voice previously carried no weight now expect to express criticisms that are acted on. In the morning before going to work and to television news at night for an hour; many people read three newspapers a day as well, including the conservative *La Prensa*. As a Sandinista banker put it to me, "You've got to know what the enemy is up to,"[28](#) which characterizes the attitude of people in the Third World who understand the threat of U.S. intervention, both covert and through force of arms.

This new, revolutionary discourse is one of information, analysis, and action. The "news" often impels people in Cuba and Nicaragua to act. The mass media speak an enabling and capacitating voice. The media help create an articulate population and they also articulate the people's concerns. And this enabling process of intellectual analysis, developed partly through mass media, reaches into geographically remote areas neglected by all cultural and educational institutions in the past. An accountant and

former war hero, Rosario Rivera, describes this combination of intellectual, personal, and social change in the small Nicaraguan village she came from,

"My aunts and cousins in the countryside have become very active in the revolution. They're doing things they've never done before. They stand up and make speeches. They talk about themselves and say they should no longer be marginalized but should work alongside men as equals."[29](#)

It is in this context of providing a capacitating voice that *THE OTHER FRANCISCO* functions. It uses some tactics of Brechtian distancing, in a way very close to Brecht's aesthetic and political concerns, but it also uses the emotions of the spectacle to represent the uprising of the oppressed. In terms of cinematic predecessors, in its voice-over narration and use of music, *THE OTHER FRANCISCO* reflects cinematic innovations introduced by Santiago Alvarez in Cuban newsreels.

Alvarez, working in a line from the Russian documentarist Dziga Vertov, emphasizes that a newsreel must not become stale with the passage of days.[30](#) Partly this politicized aesthetic derives from ICAIC's limited resources and partly from the delay in distributing the weekly filmed news to all areas of the country. But Alvarez has also developed a style that has a political base: he understands how capitalist media's way of presenting social information also induces forgetfulness and impotence. People need an analysis that lets them connect information on their social reality and to remember and use that connection. Characteristically, Alvarez's newsreels, especially his early ones, provide this analysis through an emotionally coded use of indigenous music and a voice-over narration or intertitles. In *THE OTHER FRANCISCO*, the voice over analyzes the novel *Francisco*, the repression of information about slave rebellions, and the relation of abolition to Europe's expanding mercantile capitalism. However, *THE OTHER FRANCISCO*'s analysis can also be applied by spectators to contemporary cinema and television--to the news and to Hollywood cinema's frequent reduction of stories of class oppression to stories about tragic love. The film does not just effect this operation rationally. It uses music and emotion to achieve these ends.

Giral's advisor on *THE OTHER FRANCISCO*, Tomás Gutierrez Alea, has written that film should have a concrete goal-- it should be a factor in viewers' social, emotional, and cognitive development. If we compare *THE OTHER FRANCISCO* to its contemporary U.S. counterpart, the television serial "Roots," a clear difference emerges between bourgeois and revolutionary media forms. In its form, *THE OTHER FRANCISCO* presupposes the spectators' need and willingness to experience more than pathos and more than just "being informed." It takes as reality race and class, and the consequent social formation of people's emotions, here the characters' emotions. It accepts the revolutionary responsibility of creating history, and it does so within the context of imperialism and revolution. *THE OTHER FRANCISCO* assumes that viewers have a collective need to recover their lost past, particularly that past lost through racism. It's a film in which the action does not stop with the action of watching it; it makes an implicit demand that its tactics of analysis be applied to other sources of knowledge. It combines a popular media form--the ninety-minute fictional film--with an historical examination of epistemology. It is, as Diderot advocated, a new form of *utile dulce*.

Cuban film stands in a new relation to spectators because it is a film movement within a revolution. It represents a new way of thinking about and constructing the feature fiction film, what Colin McCabe has previously called the "classic realist text." As Tomás Gutiérrez Alea writes in his study of film aesthetics, *The Viewer's Dialectic*, ideally film should establish a tie between the viewers' desire for spectacle and the film's enabling or activating effect. As Alea writes about Cuban cinema's goals, he well understands how Cuban cinema, especially a film like *THE OTHER FRANCISCO*, stands as a model for the rest of Third Cinema, for the pleasure of learning is an integral part of Third Cinema's goals. Alea describes this new model of fictional film and its relation to the spectator as follows:

"Film will be most fruitful insofar as it impels viewers toward a more profound understanding of reality and, as a result, insofar as it helps them live more actively and incites them to cease being mere spectators in the face of reality. To do that we ought to appeal not only to emotion and feeling but to reason and intellect. In this case, both moments ought to coexist irrevocably united, in such a manner that they reach those heights as Pascal put it, of provoking authentic "shudderings and tremblings" of the mind."

#### NOTES:

1. Bertolt Brecht, *The Messingkauf Dialogues*, trans. John Willett (London: Methuen, 1965). [back](#)
2. Teshome Gabriel, *Third Cinema in the Third World: The Aesthetics of Liberation* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982), p. 1. [back](#)
3. This issue is taken up in the series of articles, "Toward a New Information Order," *NACLA: Report on the Americas* 16, no. 4 (July-August 1982). [back](#)
4. Significantly, some of the most Brechtian Cuban films have been made by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and two young black directors whose projects he supervised, Giral and Sara Gomez. See my article on Sara Gomez's *ONE WAY OR ANOTHER*, "Dialectical, Revolutionary, Feminist," *JUMP CUT*, no. 20 (May 1979). [back](#)
5. Sergio Giral, "The Cuban Cinema and the Afro-Cuban Heritage, interview conducted by Julianne Burton and Gary Crowdus, *The Black Scholar* (Summer 1977): 64. [back](#)
6. Ibid., p. 65. [back](#)
7. Esteban Montejo, *The Autobiography of a Runaway Slave*, ed. Miguel Garnet, trans. Jocasta Innes (New York: Vintage-Random House, 1973). [back](#)
8. Giral, p. 69. [back](#)
9. Ibid. [back](#)

10. *and Literature* 1, no. 5 (January-February 1973). [back](#)
11. Julia Lesage, *The Film Career of Jean-Luc Godard: References and Resources* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1979) and "The Films of Jean-Luc Godard and Their Use of Brechtian Dramatic Theory" (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1976). [back](#)
12. Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1974), p. 8. [back](#)
13. Bertold Brecht, "Thesen über die Aufgabe der Einfühlung in den theatralischen Künsten, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 15, ed. Elisabeth Hauptmann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967), p. 246. Translation mine. [back](#)
14. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, ed. C.V. Arthur (New York: International Publishers, 1973). [back](#)
15. In general, as characters, elderly people, lesbians, and people of color are relegated to these minor, stereotyped, and easily "readable" roles. [back](#)
16. Montejo, pp. 19, 21. [back](#)
17. Angela Davis, "The Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves," *The Black Scholar* (December 1971): 5. Italics Davis'. [back](#)
18. Dennis West, "THE OTHER FRANCISCO," *Cineaste* 8, no. 2 (1977): 47. [back](#)
19. See Frantz Fanon, "Concerning Violence," *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1968). [back](#)
20. West, p. 47; Manuel Moreno Fraginales, trans. Cedric Belfrage, *The Sugarmill The Socioeconomic Complex of Sugar in Cuba* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976). [back](#)
21. Cornelius Vanderbilt in 1849 obtained a concession from the Nicaraguan government for a canal and connecting river traffic. He was turned against, in ruthless competition, by his associates Morgan and Garrison, who equipped William Walker as mercenary to get these concessions. Walker had fought in Mexico trying to annex the territory of Sonora to the United States. He arrived in Nicaragua in 1856, built up his forces, and in 1856 proclaimed himself president of Nicaragua, gaining the immediate recognition of the United States. He made English the official language and *reinstated* slavery. These data are from an article in a Nicaraguan newspaper, *El Nuevo Diario*, 15 November 1981: "Breve Historia Contemporanea de Nicaragua," by Sergio Ramirez Mercado. [back](#)
22. Joan Mellen, "A Reassessment of Gillo Pontecorvo's BURN!" *Cineaste* 7, no. 3 (Winter 1972-1973). [back](#)

23. Giral, p. 68. [back](#)
24. Fanon, "Concerning Violence." [back](#)
25. Ibid. [back](#)
26. Eduardo Galeano, "The Revolution as Revelation," *Socialist Revolution* 65 (September-October 1982): 15-16. [back](#)
27. LA MUJER EN LA REVOLUCION NICARAGUENSE, 16mm color film, directed Adrian Carrasco (Mexico, 1980). Translation mine. [back](#)
28. Manuel Erazo, personal communication, Managua, November [back](#)
29. Rosario Rivera, personal communication, Managua, November 1981. This interview forms part of the sound track of a videotape I made on women and daily life in Nicaragua, in which the words are those of Nicaraguan women; also the interview with Rosario Rivera and others has been published in the Spring 1983 issue of the magazine *Voices of Nicaragua* (Chicago) in its special issue on women in Nicaragua, which I co-edited with Carole Issacs. [back](#)
30. Santiago Alvarez, "The Cuban Newsreel," interview with Susan Fanshell, *A Decade of Cuban Documentary Film: 1972-1982*, catalog for film series, November-December 1982 (Young Filmmakers Foundation, New York, NY). [back](#)
31. Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, *Dialéctica del espectador*, Cuadernos *Union* (Havana: Union of Cuban Artists and Writers, 1982), p. 27. Translation mine. [back](#)

## **ADDITIONAL SOURCES**

Esther Parada, "Home Products: Notes on History, Photography, and Cultural Politics in Cuba," *Afterimage* (Rochester, N.Y.) 10, no. 5 (December 1982).

Julianne Burton, "Introduction--Revolutionary Cuban Cinema," *JUMP CUT* 19 (December 1978). *JUMP CUT* ran special sections on Cuban cinema in Nos. 20 and 22 as well. No. 22 (May 1980) contains a useful bibliography on Cuban cinema by Julianne Burton and John Hess.